

To Mr Michael Powell, Chairman, and all at the Federal Communications Commission:

Please keep the television/newspaper cross-ownership ban in place.

The large media companies say that this ban infringes on their free speech rights. This argument is specious. The company can still get its message out to those who would listen.

Cross-ownership of multiple media in the same market does not enable free speech; it makes the speech of media companies more difficult to avoid. Free speech is not about preventing private citizens from covering their ears. Free speech guarantees one's right to say something; it does not force people to listen. The major media outlets should not be able to force anyone to listen to their messages unwillingly.

Cross-ownership grants more speech rights to large companies with money, and makes it more difficult for individuals to be heard. This country works best with an informed populace, and this depends in large part on a diversity of viewpoints being available to everyone. Five large corporate viewpoints do not constitute a diversity.

Free speech is a principle, not a privilege to be sold to the highest bidder. It protects unpopular, individual, anti-corporate speech just as much as popular, corporately-funded speech. This country needs both to be equally accessible. Cross-ownership effectively says that an individual's opinion is only worth as much money as he is willing to put behind it. This is not the way to go.

Cross-ownership also has disturbing implications for Internet usage as well, with so many Americans getting Internet access via cable companies.

Again, I urge you to leave the cross-ownership ban in place.

-- Tony Monroe